

# *Ascension Lutheran Church*

*Pastor Godkin's Sermon for the week of June 7, 2009*

The Holy Spirit Fills Us to the Point of Overflowing (Acts 2:2:14, 22-36)

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Our text is from the second chapter of Acts:

“This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.”

This is the text.

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ, today we come to the end of what is called the festival half of the church year. On Trinity Sunday we reach the climax of the festival half of the church year. Today we meditate on the mystery of the Triune God. In one sense every Sunday is Trinity Sunday. The Divine Service begins when we call on the Name of the One true God: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But this week we especially focus on this mystery of the One Divine Essence of God in three Persons, Three in One and One in Three. No doubt the Trinity is a mystery. It is such a profound mystery that sometimes in our pondering of it we can lose sight of what God does for us and how the three Persons in God work together for our salvation. The Father sends the Son who with the Father then sends the Holy Spirit. The Son reveals the grace and mercy of the Father and the Holy Spirit reveals that Jesus is the Christ, our Redeemer.

In today's text in Acts Peter says to the crowd gathered to hear him preach on the Day of Pentecost that the Son receives the Spirit from the Father and then pours Him out. This image of the Spirit being poured out brings to mind something like water. I would like to use this image of pouring to look at God's work in and through us.

The Bible says we are born sinful, “sinful from the time my mother conceived me”, as it says in Psalm 51. This means we don't have the Holy Spirit at birth. We are born spiritually dry and spiritually empty. (*Hold up empty cup and pitcher of water*). And even worse, we are born spiritually blind and dead and enemies of God. With only a sinful nature we are turned away from Him (*Cup upside down*). And we don't receive the grace He wants to pour out on us. (*Pour water on upside-down cup*).

This is why we need the Holy Spirit. Only He can turn us around. He turns us toward God so we can receive Him. (*Turn cup over and fill*)

This being turned toward God happens when we believe the Gospel and are Baptized. When you were Baptized it was a wet, turnaround event where Jesus delivered to you personally what He won for us all by His death and resurrection: the forgiveness of sins and life in His kingdom.

And this turn around event continues every day. Through daily repentance we drown the Old Adam and the new man emerges. The Triune Lord calls us to be turned again and again and again to the cross and Jesus' forgiveness.

But as we know this turning is a constant struggle. Sin always turns us away. (*Pour out water little by little*). We struggle as anger over something begins to well up inside and leads us to use hurtful words with someone; or too often we tell ourselves we are too busy for our daily prayers and Bible readings. But this is a delusion. In truth, there is no better time spent than in the Word of God. We struggle to deny ourselves and take up our cross daily and put the things of God first. It is a struggle to allow Him to be the Lord of all aspects of our life. The Spirit continues to call us back to our Baptism – to die to our sins and live for Christ where true life is found. (*Fill cup*)

For now we want to focus on what it means to live out our lives in this kind of right relationship to God, a relationship given to us by the Son, who was sent by the Father, and who at our Baptism filled us with the Spirit.

Christ has given us a right relationship with the Father and yet that is not the end of the story. Our cup is filled for a reason, for a special purpose. For example, we pour a glass of milk so that we might drink it; we pour gas into a car so may use the car and go places. It wouldn't do any good if we had a tank full of gas but never used the gas.

God's purpose in pouring out the Holy Spirit was to lead others to be turned toward God and filled up. And His purpose in pouring His grace into our lives, specifically the Gospel message, is to fill up others.

(*Empty the glass*) God can use us to touch so many people be it by comforting someone in the hospital; encouraging someone who doubts or is in despair; or getting to know people from other countries who learn Bible stories and hear the Gospel through ESL classes. The possibilities are endless. Everyone we see is in need of God's love and the saving Gospel.

And yet the problem with pouring out into the lives of others is that we can forget that we are filled with the Spirit by water and the Word. Constantly pouring out into the lives of others can be draining. At home with our responsibilities with family; in our various vocations at the workplace; working long and demanding hours can sap our strength. Sometimes relationships can be draining. Misunderstandings happen, people say things they shouldn't. It takes effort to forgive.

The good news is that God is with us during these trying times as we serve others. And when you feel your well running dry you can always go back to the source that connects us to Jesus' cross. Our Baptism never runs dry. The Word and the Sacraments gives the faith, encouragement, and refreshment we need. God fills us through the Word and Sacraments so His Spirit may overflow in us and our faith and love may contact those around us.

The truth is that if we are not in the Word regularly then we will be lacking the Holy Spirit and we will not be able to encourage others in the faith. And worse, our own spiritual life

will begin to suffer and get weak. The Word of the Lord and the Holy Spirit come as a package. When you have one you have the other. In short, the key to reviving spiritual life lies in the Word of the Lord. Jesus' words are Spirit and they are life.

Indeed, God filled us up at our Baptism for the purpose of touching others with His love and the Gospel. And God does not leave us to spend our time running on empty. He draws us back to the Word and Sacraments to fill us with His Spirit. His Spirit gives us grace to move and walk in His ways. As the Lord says in Ezekiel 36, "I will sprinkle clean water on you and you will be clean...and I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees".

Jesus gives us another image for the pouring of the Holy Spirit. He says in John 7, "Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' Now this He said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive." The source for this river of living water is Christ Himself and He is inexhaustible. He gives until it overflows. We do well to keep close to Him and His Words.

Friends, the promise of your Baptism goes with you back to your homes, workplaces, and families. The source is available to you always. Make use of it. The Spirit turned you and put you back into a right relationship with God in Jesus Christ. And Jesus has poured out the Spirit He received from God the Father. And that pouring has become a spring of living water that we now have the privilege to share with others. Again today Jesus reminds you of what He did at your Baptism: He poured into you the Holy Spirit so that you remain filled and overflowing. Amen. The peace of God that surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.